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FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: February 2, 1978

SUBJECT: Monthly Report on Political Violence and
Human Rights: December 1977

REF

SUMMARY: Nineteen Guatemalans died in some 28 incidents of presumed political violence. The kidnapping and/or murder of several prominent individuals brought loud denunciations in the press and other media. So widespread was public concern that the President found it necessary to state that despite increased violence he opposed the imposition of a state of siege or suspension of the national elections scheduled for March 5. High level government meetings to consider ways to curb violence within the law (or by enacting new laws) have become commonplace. The business community in particular is disturbed, if not downright frightened, and pressure on the government is increasing for stronger measures. The announcement of the leftist EGP (Guerrilla Army of the Poor) taking credit for the kidnapping of ex-Foreign Minister Roberto Herrera and the killing of businessman Luis Canella ended hopeful speculation that these acts were the work of common criminals. END SUMMARY

Violence in the Capital. Guatemala City was the focus of violence in December because of the kidnapping and/or slaying of a number of prominent Guatemalans. Two members of the Council of State (ex-Foreign Minister Roberto Herrera (Guatemala 0025) and businessman Luis Canella (77 Guatemala 7594) were kidnapped. Herrera was being held for ransom; Canella died from injuries while resisting. Two former presidential aides (Jorge David Garcia, in the Ydigoras administration, and Enrique Arrazola, under Castillo Armas) were assassinated outright. Two other prominent individuals disappeared, industrialist Luis Arimany (in mid-November) and lawyer Arturo

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Guatemala A-11

2

Yaquián. The Arimany family only recently admitted the disappearance; apparently nothing has been heard from the abductors. Yaquián was released after his family paid a ransom. The EGP has to date acknowledged its connection only with Herrera and Canella. García, in addition to having been a high official of the National Police in the previous administration, was recently an MLN activist. Arrazola likewise was an MLN adherent. In neither case has informed speculation pointed to the Left. In García's case, witnesses said he apparently knew well the persons who picked him up.

The murder of Canella brought the business community out in force. Many shops, restaurants, and movies closed the afternoon of the funeral. Hitting so close to home, the killing brought a strong reaction from apprehensive businessmen who demanded strong action against violence. Still they hesitated to ascribe political motives to the act. Following the kidnapping of Herrera, the EGP boldly announced its responsibility for both kidnappings and called for a "People's War" as the only solution to the Guatemala 'crisis'. They used the term "guerra," rather than customary "lucha," which has the connotation of "struggle." Pressure mounted on the government to declare extraordinary measures, but President Laugerud insisted that he opposed a state of siege or suspension of elections. The EGP for its part has denounced the elections as fraudulent ("all are government candidates") and maintained that the military campaign such as was carried out against guerrillas and campesinos in the El Quiché area in 1976 under the Laugerud government would have been carried out under a state of siege during prior administrations.

Violence Elsewhere. Seven unidentified bodies were found in December. At least one was from the previous month and at least three originated somewhere other than where they were found. (The bodies of Arrazola and García, who had been kidnapped in Guatemala City, were found in Santa Rosa and Sacatepéquez departments, respectively.) Reports on other bodies identified by name contained little to identify the deceased's political ties or to give clues to the assassins. Three kidnappings were by well-armed groups of men dressed in olive green, but both Left and Right have access to this

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Guatemala A-11

3

strategem. Some five bombings took place, all but one merely exploding leaflets advertising the PGT and its philosophy. No one was injured but a bomb severely damaged the Toyota agency in Retalhuleu department.

Alleged Government Violence. In December, three campesinos denounced to the press the "illegal" actions of the Agrarian Reform Institute (INTA) in dispossessing them of land they had farmed for over 12 years in Ixcán Grande, El Quiché. INTA officials used the army to transport the campesinos and their families (a total of 30 persons) to Huehuetenango where they exist "on charity" pending study of their claim by a Presidentially appointed investigator (the governor of Huehuetenango, according to the campesinos). The campesinos alleged INTA officials and an army patrol stole from them almost \$2,000 (their corn sales) plus personal items. (Many more campesinos are involved in land claims in this area; some cases have reportedly been resolved, but new cases keep appearing.) Even the EGP has acknowledged, however, that this is a conflict between two campesino groups.

Charges against officially supported violence were also made by the National Campesino Confederation (CNC) in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango. A farm worker was beaten and his family threatened by three persons identified to a justice of the peace. The worker, who has labor claims pending against his employers, was threatened with death if he did not leave town. According to the CNC, the justice of the peace, instead of taking up the case of the claims, threatened the worker with imprisonment as a troublesome "instigator."

Election violence threatened in the Petén between members of the MLN and PR-PID. According to one report, an MLN deputy was threatened with assassination by a PR-PID party follower. The head of the local military detachment reportedly said he could do nothing. He explained that the PR-PID member was a comisionado militar and authorized to carry a gun. The congressman said that he would ask the President to investigate.

Human Rights Atmospherics. December, embracing both Human Rights Day and the Christmas season, not surprisingly

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Guatemala A-11

accounted for a number of speeches and announcements calling for peace and cessation of violence. Those calling for peace seemed to have no real hope that there would be a reduction in the level of violence.

Human Rights Day came and went with little notice. The official government newspaper, Diario de Centro América, carried President Carter's statement in part. Impacto carried an editorial supporting the Carter statement. The Foreign Minister responded to our note conveying the text with the remark that it had been read with "special care." Presidential candidate General Ricardo Peralta Méndez issued a Human Rights Day statement calling for respect for such rights in Guatemala.

But just as Impacto had complained of government inspired violations of human rights in Latin America, General Peralta denounced such violations by the present government of Guatemala ("Lo fundamental es poner fin a la participación estatal en actos de violencia..." -- La Nación, December 18.) (See also attached excerpt from Guatemala News for other examples.)

President Laugerud, Cardinal Casariego, and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the national university (San Carlos) all made the traditional holiday plea for peace.

On the brighter side, the San José Convention on Human Rights went forward to the Guatemalan Congress. Foreign Ministry sources expect early approval when the Congress reconvenes.

Statistical Inferences. "Chiquimula," headlined one paper, "A murder for every 1.7 thousand inhabitants." "A murder every nine hours," screamed another leader.

According to El Gráfico, which made a short study of reported violent deaths in Guatemala for the first eleven months of 1977, almost 900 persons were murdered in Guatemala, and over 200 persons were kidnapped. Those recorded as "kidnapped, tortured and shot" during that period numbered 107. This may be compared to the 197 politically related deaths ascribed by the Embassy for the same period. Attached to this report are some tables from El Gráfico.

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Guatemala A-11

5

As to what some of these statistics might mean, the comparable U.S. figure (Homicide Rates, Selected Countries 1973: Statistical Abstract) is about 10 homicides per 100,000 population versus about 15 for Guatemala. The Guatemala figure is slightly higher than Mexico (13) and about the same as Puerto Rico.

On a major city basis, one might note that while Detroit in 1975 (Statistical Abstract) recorded 44 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, Guatemala City recorded over 25 per 100,000 in 1977, or slightly more than New York City, but less than Washington, D. C.

The Guatemalan figures are necessarily unrefined, but do provide some insight into the context of political violence in this society. Our tentative conclusion is that while violent death is a commonplace in Guatemala, the dimensions of the problem are not as unique as we would have supposed.

Statistics (December 1977). Of the 19 deaths, three were in eastern Guatemala, four in the capital, eight in the Pacific lowlands, three in the Indian highlands, and one in Izabal. The character of and the attention given to the four in Guatemala City, as usual, overshadowed the relatively even distribution across the country.

Kidnapping tallies are inexact. Relatives cover up kidnappings and disappearances. Even the Vice Minister of Government admitted recently that more people are missing than is known publicly.

Enclosures:

1. Excerpt from The Guatemala News, December 23, 1977
2. Table - Data on Violent Incidents Collected by Diario El Gráfico, January 1-November 30, 1977

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Violence Rate Runs High in 1977

About 900 persons are known to have been murdered in Guatemala this year and more than two thirds of them were killed by bullets.

Based on statistics compiled by the local newspaper El Grafico, a murder occurred every nine hours on the average between January 1 and November 30, 1977. Last year, the frequency was slightly lower, with a person getting killed every ten and a half hours.

Death through firearms accounts for 594 of the murders. More than 100 persons were shot after first having been kidnapped and tortured, the newspaper reports. And one third of the victims died from machete, or knife attacks, poison, strangulation and other murderous attacks.

El Grafico also lists at least 100 cases where members of

security forces were implicated in the crimes. Security elements include policemen, soldiers, and military commissioners. Examples from the publication's archives include:

...The departmental Police Chief of Retalhuleu, Colonel Victor Manuel Folgar Bonilla and three other department agents are accused of having killed two brothers in early August, 1977;

...National Policemen Jose Antonio Monzon and Rolando Anton, and their accomplice, Treasury Agent Jose Otoniel Espana Lemus, shoot and kill a woman in Catepeque, supposedly while chasing a delinquent last March;

...Soldier Raul Bernardo Ochoa Moran shoots and kills a young student in San Pedro Carcha September 20;

...Military Commissioner Trini-

dad Humberto Lopez shoots and kills a farmer in El Progreso, November 10;

In addition, a number of private guards committed various murders, including the violent death of a shopkeeper in Zone 7 last August, and the shooting of a young driver in the parking lot of the Mentufar shopping center September 3.

Violence in the rural areas has gone up only slightly (0.8 percent), but more than one third of the murder victims during the first eleven months of this year were farm workers and owners of small farms.

Fourteen finqueros and finca administrators were killed, accounting for two per cent of the total number of murders.

Close to 25 percent of the murder victims are listed as workers and salaried employees from urban areas -- the professional group occupying second place in the murder statistics. Nothing is known about the profession of 15 percent of the victims; about half of them were never identified.

Only a small number of the murdered persons were women (84, or 9.4 percent) and minors (57, or 6.4 percent). El Grafico gives the number of murdered men as 73.2 or 84.2 percent.

August marks the high point of murders in Guatemala when 13.7 percent of the assassinations

were committed. And the Department of Guatemala, which includes the capital, is the most dangerous place in the republic, accounting for 31.5 percent of all murders. Chiquimula follows with 11.6 percent.

Reporting on the 214 known kidnap cases that plagued the country during the first eleven months of this year, El Grafico states that at least eight of them were followed up by extortion demands. The rest, with most of the victims being students, workers, small farmers and farmhands, showed no evidence of extortion goals; in fact, most of the victims, especially in the rural areas were found murdered shortly after they had disappeared.

The eight cases that involved extortion demands include the kidnapping of Eduardo Casanova, Salvadoran Ambassador to Guatemala, who was captured and held by the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (GAP) during the May 1977 meeting of directors of the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) in Guatemala City. Casanova was released after the local mass media and IDB officials agreed to publicize a long manifesto by the kidnap organization. Casanova's kidnapping appeared to have been the only such case linked to political ends this year.

Other extortion-based kidnappings include the case of young

Roberto Fischer, who was killed during the kidnap attempt. One of the kidnapers, a student, also died from wounds received during the attack, and ongoing police investigations point toward a clandestine student group that planned to allegedly use Fischer to get hold of a large ransom, reports El Grafico.

The kidnap of industrialist Emilio Colomer last April was committed by three policemen who were found shot near the Periferico in Zone 7 last April, police maintain. In the trunk of the taxi the kidnapers had stolen earlier, police found a large sum of money (allegedly close to Q100,000) which had supposedly been paid for the release of Colomer.

In many of the rural kidnappings, witnesses report the involvement of heavily armed men who were dressed in olive-green uniforms. In most cases, the victims were later found tortured and murdered.

Two of the most notorious kidnap cases that occurred last summer involved two student leaders, Robin Garcia Davila and Anibal Caballeros, whose mutilated bodies were discovered several days after the students had been reported missing. The incidents touched off a week of massive student demonstrations in the capital with the protestors accusing government authorities of having committed the murders.

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Enclosure 2
Guatemala A-11
1

Data on Violent Incidents
Collected by Diario El Gráfico
Murders in the Republic of Guatemala
during the period January 1 - November 30, 1977

Men	752	84.2%
Women	84	8.4%
Minors	57	6.4%

Murders in the Republic of Guatemala
during the period January 1 - November 30, 1977

Shot and killed	487	54.5%
Kidnapped, tortured and shot	107	11.8%
Others	<u>299</u>	<u>33.4%</u>
	893	99.7%

Occupation of 752 persons murdered between
January 1 - November 30, 1977

1. Farmers, peasants and rural workers	283	37.6%
2. Owners and administrators of plantations	14	1.9%
3. Salaried city workers and employees	138	18.4%
4. Entrepreneurs and merchants	28	3.7%
5. Public sector officials, elected or not	15	2.0%
6. Teachers and professionals	14	1.9%
7. University and secondary students	29	3.9%
8. Political leaders	12	1.6%
9. Members of the various police forces	41	5.5%
10. Military (soldiers, officers, MPs, <u>comi-</u> <u>sionados militares</u> and their aides)	23	3.1%
11. Other (criminals and unidentified by occupation)	145	19.3%

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Enclosure 2
Guatemala A-11
2

Murders in Guatemala by Department
January 1 - November 30, 1977

Guatemala	281	31.5%
Escuintla	66	7.4%
San Marcos	45	5.3%
Santa Rosa	41	4.6%
Chiquimula	104	11.6%
Jutiapa	37	4.1%
Huehuetenango	4	0.4%
Quezaltenango	43	4.8%
Jalapa	26	2.9%
Retalhuleu	56	6.3%
Zacapa	35	3.9%
Chimaltenango	7	0.8%
Totonicapan	4	0.4%
Izabal	53	5.9%
El Quiché	26	2.9%
El Progreso	7	0.8%
Suchitepequez	34	3.8%
Alta Verapaz	11	1.2%
Baja Verapaz	8	0.9%
El Peten	2	0.2%
Solola	3	0.3%
	893	100.0%

Frequency of murder - January thru November 1977
(Percentages)

January	8.3	July	8.7
February	6.0	August	13.7
March	8.5	September	9.5
April	9.3	October	8.4
May	9.8	November	9.2
June	8.3		

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Enclosure 2
Guatemala A-11
3

Geographic Distribution of Murders in Guatemala
January thru November 1977

<u>Center</u> (Guatemala, Chimaltenango, Sacatepequez)	32.2%
<u>Northeast</u> (El Progreso, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal)	22.3%
<u>South</u> (Escuintla, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez)	17.5%
<u>East</u> (Jutiapa, Jalapa, Santa Rosa)	11.6%
<u>West</u> (San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Solola, El Quiché, Quezaltenango, Totonicapan)	13.9%
<u>North</u> (Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, El Peten)	2.4%

Number of inhabitants per murder in Guatemala
January - November 1977

(thousands of inhabitants)

Chiquimula	1.7
Retalhuleu	2.3
Izabal	3.0
Zacapa	3.0
Guatemala	4.0
Escuintla	4.2
Santa Rosa	4.3
Jalapa	4.4
Jutiapa	6.3
Quezaltenango	7.3
San Marcos	8.6
Suchitepequez	8.8
El Progreso	10.0
El Quiché	11.5
Baja Verapaz	13.4
Alta Verapaz	25.5
Chimaltenango	28.0
El Peten	32.0
Totonicapan	41.7
Solola	42.0
Huehuetenango	92.2

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